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Letter dated 31 July 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to my latest report to the Security Council concerning the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2014/438), I hereby request the Council to consider the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which is due to expire on 31 August 2014. In a letter dated 25 July 2014 addressed to me, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon requested that the Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of one year, without amendment.

UNIFIL continues to play a crucial role in ensuring peace and stability in southern Lebanon, as well as full respect for the Blue Line by both Lebanon and Israel. Recent incidents of rockets fired from southern Lebanon towards Israel and of retaliation by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) across the Blue Line are cause for concern. Between 11 and 16 July 2014, at least 11 rockets were launched from the UNIFIL area of operations towards Israel in five separate incidents. Five of the rockets hit Israel. IDF retaliated on all occasions with several rounds of artillery or illumination fire across the Blue Line towards the launching areas. In addition, on 11 July 2014, the Lebanese armed forces found and dismantled two rockets set to launch towards Israel. No casualties or significant damage were reported from either side. In each instance, UNIFIL immediately engaged with IDF and the Lebanese armed forces to urge them to exercise maximum restraint and cooperate with UNIFIL in order to prevent a further escalation of tension and to restore the cessation of hostilities. UNIFIL investigations are ongoing, with a view to establishing the facts and circumstances of these incidents.

In accordance with its mandate, UNIFIL continues to monitor the cessation of hostilities and assist the Lebanese armed forces in taking steps towards the establishment, between the Blue Line and the Litani river, of an area free of any unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons. UNIFIL remains engaged with the parties on the outstanding issue of northern Ghajar and continues to monitor and report on ground and air violations of resolution 1701 (2006).

UNIFIL also takes all action necessary, within its capabilities, to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force continues to carry out its dual mandate of conducting maritime interdiction operations in the area of maritime operations and training Lebanese navy personnel.

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Efforts are ongoing to ensure a comprehensive approach to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) that integrates the endeavours of UNIFIL, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the United Nations country team to further involve the Government of Lebanon in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and to increase the capacity of the Lebanese armed forces. This is intended to facilitate the gradual assumption by the armed forces of effective and sustainable security control of the UNIFIL area of operations and Lebanese territorial waters, as a key element in supporting moves towards a permanent ceasefire.

I underline the call for increased international support for the Lebanese armed forces, in response to their capabilities development plan, as well as in the context of the strategic dialogue between the forces and UNIFIL. In this regard, I am encouraged by the readiness of the international community to support the armed forces through the established coordination tools of international assistance, including the strategic dialogue. This was confirmed most recently by participants in the Ministerial Conference on International Support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, hosted on 17 June 2014 by the Government of Italy in Rome in the framework of the International Support Group for Lebanon.

Cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese armed forces on land and at sea continues to be essential for the implementation of the mandate of UNIFIL. Despite the temporary redeployments of some units of the armed forces from the South Litani Sector to elsewhere in the country, a substantial number of coordinated operational activities between UNIFIL and the armed forces continue to be conducted. As a result of the recent rocket firing incidents, UNIFIL, in coordination with the armed forces, is maintaining an enhanced operational presence on the ground and has intensified patrols across the area of operations to prevent further incidents. The armed forces have increased their presence in the area.

The well-established liaison and coordination arrangements of UNIFIL with the parties, including the tripartite mechanism, have facilitated a number of constructive and pragmatic measures. UNIFIL continues to build on its efforts to promote practical arrangements on the ground and understanding between the Lebanese armed forces and IDF in order to further stabilize the situation along the Blue Line, remove pretexts and possible points of friction, prevent future incidents and build trust.

The process of making the Blue Line visible is proceeding with the marking of non-contentious points. UNIFIL has continued to ensure that the tripartite mechanism is as flexible as possible and enables the parties to discuss a wider range of issues.

The overall attitude of the local population towards UNIFIL remains positive. The freedom of movement of UNIFIL and the security and safety of its personnel are integral to the effective execution of its tasks. The primary responsibility for ensuring freedom of movement to UNIFIL personnel in the area of operations lies with the Lebanese authorities.

The total number of military personnel, as at 15 July 2014, stands at 10,159 and the civilian component numbers 278 international and 607 national staff.

I am grateful to the 38 troop-contributing countries that make up UNIFIL for their ongoing commitment. That commitment, coupled with the development of a

strategic partnership with the Lebanese armed forces, has enabled the successful implementation of several key aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). As the UNIFIL mandate approaches its expiration date, however, it is clear that more work remains to be done.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL, Major General Luciano Portolano, and to all the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL, for the work they are carrying out in southern Lebanon in the service of peace. I also would like to acknowledge the dedicated service of Major General Paolo Serra, who has led UNIFIL for the past two and a half years and who completed his assignment on 24 July 2014.

Regarding the financial aspects of UNIFIL, the General Assembly, by its resolution 68/292, appropriated to the Special Account for UNIFIL the amount of $509.6 million gross for the maintenance of the mission for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of the mission beyond 31 August 2014, the cost of maintaining UNIFIL will be limited to the amounts approved by the Assembly.

As at 23 July 2014, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNIFIL amounted to $19.2 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at the same date amounted to $3,267.1 million. As at 23 July 2014, the total amount owed to Member States that contribute troops to UNIFIL was $24.1 million. Troop and contingent-owned equipment costs have been reimbursed for the periods up to 30 April 2014 and 31 March 2014, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

With the above information in mind, I recommend that the Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of 12 months, until 31 August 2015.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon